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ABSTRACT

Restructured schools should be centers of inquiry and reflection, not of unexamined tradition; curriculum and instruction courses in teacher education programs should facilitate critical inquiry and reflection. A graduate level curriculum models course at the Wichita (Kansas) State University was restructured around the basic tenet of critical inquiry and reflection, based on John Smyth's model for developing and sustaining critical reflection in teacher education. Several teachers' stories are told in vignette form as evidence of the power of reflective thought to aid educators in confronting hidden curriculum issues. The personal experiences of students whose environments included such hazards as destructive relationships, climates of futility, learned irresponsibility, and loss of purpose are explored, along with the efforts made by teachers to reclaim these students or the lack of effort and its tragic results. The teachers in the university course felt that they gained the power to reclaim individual student lives that are being snuffed out by bureaucracy, indifference, naivete, and institutionalized inequality implicit in the hidden curriculum. (Contains 14 references.) (JDD)

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ED 363 594

TEACHERS IN THE TRENCHES

Reflecting On Youth At Risk

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"When pedagogy and curricular policy reflect equalitarian goals, they do what education can do: oppose socialization with desocialization, choose critical consciousness over commercial consciousness, transformation of society over reproduction of inequality; promote democracy by practicing it and by studying authoritarianism; challenge student withdrawal through participatory courses, illuminate the myths supporting the elite hierarchy of society; interfere with the scholastic disabling of students through a critical literacy program; raise awareness about the thought and language expressed in daily life; distribute research skills and censored information useful for investigating power and policy in society; and invite students to reflect socially on their conditions, to consider overcoming the limits." (Ira Shor, pp. 14-15).

TEACHERS IN THE TRENCHES

It would be impossible to find an educator who is not aware of the concept of "at risk." Since the 1983 report "A Nation at Risk," few topics have gained as much attention in the realm of education. Public forums, action plans, best sellers, front-page stories, news features--the issue is broadcast everywhere: our children are at risk. What was once perceived as a racial or economic issue has jumped these artificial boundaries like a grassfire burning out of control to claim children and youth from all ethnic and cultural groups, geographic regions, socio-economic classes, and ability groups. Even as action groups review the accomplishments of the "Rochester Contract," the "Comer Process" and the success stories of educators Jamee Escalante, Marva Collins, Abdulalim Shabazz, Sylvia Ashton-Warner, and Elliot Wigginton, the nation continues to report higher numbers of at-risk youth.[1]

As Urbanski (1988) eloquently proclaimed in reporting on Rochester's effort to restructure:

> The problem with today's schools is not that they are no longer as good as they once were. The problem with today's

schools is that they are precisely what they always were--while the world around them has changed significantly.

Schools must be restructured as centers of inquiry and reflection--not of unexamined tradition. (p. 48)

While some would argue it's a chicken and egg debate to determine where restructuring should begin, strong voices in teacher education are calling for change at the university level (Dilworth, 1992). Curriculum and instruction courses should facilitate this critical inquiry and reflection.

WAGING WAR ON "AT-RISK"--CURRICULARISTS IN THE CLASSROOMS

A graduate level curriculum models course at The Wichita State University has been restructured around the basic tenet of critical inquiry and reflection. The aim of becoming reflective practitioners (Nolan & Huber, 1989) is the foundation for the course which includes the following core texts: Eliot Eisner's The Educational Imagination (1985), Ron Miller's What Are School's For? (1990) and, the capstone for addressing curriculum responsive to at-risk children and youth, Brendtro, Brokenleg and Van Bockern's Reclaiming Youth at Risk (1990).

While exploring specific curriculum design topics ranging

from science, technology, and society to whole language, the challenge of being culturally responsive to youth at risk is kept at the forefront. The strategy that has made this approach to curriculum design and evaluation particularly effective has been the application of John Smyth's (1989) model for developing and sustaining critical reflection in teacher education. The four stages of the model are defined in Figure 1.

What Smyth's model is particularly appropriate for in analyzing curriculum is understanding the hidden, implicit curriculum (Eisner, 1985).

Insert figure 1 here

The reflective responses which follow evidence the power of reflective thought to aid educators in confronting hidden curriculum issues. The teachers whose stories are told in these vignettes offer them to other curricularists for the following reasons:

1. The vignettes are evidence of the level of reflection teachers can attain working with the Smyth model.

2. The authors believe that teachers and administrators, the curricularists they personally represent, cannot afford to wait for massive district, state, or federal changes to empower them to save youth at risk; they must find ways to empower themselves.

3. On the final day of sharing these vignettes, the group determined that what they had learned and discovered had to be shared with other teachers who were looking for answers as they struggled to design and evaluate curriculum to effectively meet the diverse needs of their students.

We agreed with the observation of Little Tree:

> Granma said I had done right, for when you come on something that is good, first thing to do is share it with whoever you can find; that way, the good spreads out to where no telling it will go. Which is right. (Carter, 1976, p. 57)

REFLECTIVE RESPONSES TO BRENDTRO, BROKENLEG AND VAN BOCKERN

The ultimate failure in dealing with youth at risk was most painfully pointed out by Brendtro, Brokenleg, and Van Bockern in their profile of Richard Cardinal (R.C.), a 17-year-old Metis Indian youth from Canada, whose painful experiences would cause him to write:

> I didn't want no one to love any more. I had been hurt too many times. So I began to learn the art of blocking out all emotions and shut out the rest of the world. The door would open to no one. (Brendtro, Brokenleg and Van Bockern, 1990, p. 9.)

Richard Cardinal hanged himself in the yard of his "last" foster home.

Other "R.C." Cases

Being an educator, as pointed out by Brendtro, Brokenleg and Van Bockern, requires one to be aware of and willing to help youth at risk. To accomplish this requires teachers who are willing to put themselves at risk--at risk to care, to be rejected, and to fail.

Many educators know an "R.C.," a student whose environment fits one or more of the four main ecological hazards identified by Brendtro, Brokenleg, and Van Bockern:

1. DESTRUCTIVE RELATIONSHIPS, as experienced by the rejected or unclaimed child, hungry for love but unable to trust, expecting to be hurt again;
2. CLIMATES OF FUTILITY, as encountered by the insecure

youngster, crippled by feelings of inadequacy and a fear of failure;

3. LEARNED IRRESPONSIBILITY as seen in the youth whose sense of powerlessness may be masked by indifference or defiant, rebellious behavior;
4. LOSS OF PURPOSE, as portrayed by a generation of self-centered youth, desperately searching for meaning in a world of confusing values. (Brendtro, Brokenleg, and Van Bockern, 1990, pp. 6-7.)

Participants in this curriculum course explore the applicability of Brendtro, Brokenleg and Van Bockern's holistic Native American philosophy of child development to personal experiences with students. The reflections and interviews are often painful, but the revelations and discoveries empower these teachers to go forward with a more holistic pedagogy for reaching youth on the edge--youth like **Jules** who knew only destructive relationships; **Brenda** who experienced overwhelming loneliness and abandonment; **Everett** who would discover support for the responsibility he shouldered; **Jamee** who revolted against the responsibility exacted from her; **Dale** whose "climate of

futility" festered into a destructive nightmare twenty years later; the **Nahamán** and the street children whose sufferings of police brutality seem to portend the Rodney King "incident"; **Julie** who knew only isolation; and the small, imaginative boy inspired by **Mr. Hope.**

"Jules" by Perry Pollman

Her name was Julie Roberts, known affectionately by all as "Jules." And that is what Julie was, a jewel! Jules definitely came from an "at risk" environment. Her parents were divorced, she had a sister who tried to commit suicide and she had very low self-esteem. I believe that this environment is what led to her indifference concerning her academic achievement. Jules wasn't a "troublemaker"; she was just struggling to make sense of a world that kept changing the rules to the game!

Huber acknowledges the significant contributions to this article made by her graduate students, most of whom are teachers by day and students by night and during the summer. Their names appear with their vignettes; the names of their students have been fictionalized.

Jules came to V. Academy (V.A.), a boarding academy, as a freshman halfway through the 1989-90 school year. Her mother, with whom she was living at the time, more or less forced her to come to V.A. because she did not like the group of young people that Jules associated with in public school. She wanted Jules to be in a private academy where she would be in a "better environment."

Jules was readily accepted and liked by both students and faculty at V.A. She became especially attached to one of her classmates, Brian. They didn't become "boyfriend-girlfriend," but you could see a special bond between them. Jules even ran for a Student Association office at the end of the year. She ended up dropping out of the race because someone got into the Administration Building and tore down her campaign posters.

The summer between Jules' freshman and sophomore years was a difficult one. Rebelling against what she perceived as her mother's unacceptance (because she would not allow Jules to associate with the friends she chose), Jules decided to go to live with her father in California. Her father, being suddenly forced to deal with a teenage daughter, was unable to handle

Jules and sent her back to her mother. Thus, any ground that Jules had gained during the last half of her freshman year at V.A. quickly turned to quick sand.

Jules came back to V.A. at the beginning of her sophomore year unsure of what she wanted to do. She was thinking about trying to go back with her father or perhaps go to live with her sister, who was even less stable than Jules (her sister sought escape through drugs).

I sat down and talked with Jules on registration day, 1990. She was confused and the conversation was mainly one-sided, with Jules being somewhat quiet and reserved. I told Jules that she had a place at V.A. and that we all wanted her to return. The entire student body was in the middle of a registration day water fight and, about that time, I was doused with a bucket of water from one of the students. Rising to the challenge, I went off to seek my revenge. I noticed Brian go over to speak with Jules after I left. I never returned to finish the conversation . . .

Jules decided to stay at V.A., but she didn't stay long. About one month into the year, Brian was "dating" another girl.

Jules was jealous and felt as if Brian did not like her anymore. Also, she went through a tragic experience when her pet ferret died from the heat.

Jules became more and more withdrawn and insecure as the weeks went by. She began to fail academically and left V.A. by mid-October. After spending about a month with her mother, Jules decided to try again to live with her father. It didn't work out, and by December Jules was living with her sister in Oregon.

What could have or should have been done to reclaim Jules from among the "students at risk"? One is so full of wisdom and advice when looking back, but what good is that wisdom and advice for Jules?

Instead of looking back and wondering what could have been done for Jules, we need to apply the wisdom and advice of hindsight to the educational system, an educational system that allows youth at risk, like Jules, to roam the halls of our schools unnoticed or noticed only in a negative light; an educational system so wrapped up in "teaching" our youth that we fail to educate them--fail to educate them concerning their worth, ability and potential; an educational system that sends

youth at risk into a world that they are unprepared to meet; an educational system that, some would say, our youth are failing. I would say, an educational system that is failing our youth.

What theory can I propose to reclaim students at risk that Brendtro, Brokenleg, and Van Bockern did not give? I can think of none. But I can dedicate myself to applying the knowledge gained from the reading of that book when dealing with ALL STUDENTS!--dedicate myself to creating a "reclaiming environment" in my sphere of influence.

In order to reach youth at risk, I feel that it is critically important that we be able to identify with them. I did not come from an "at risk" background and had trouble identifying with my students who did. I say "had" because after my experiences with Jules, I tried to put myself in her place in order to identify with what she must have gone through. I know that I will never be able to sympathize with what students like Jules go through, but I do think that I can now empathize with them.

Jules Roberts was found dead January 1, 1991. She committed suicide after a New Year's Eve party at her sister's house. So young and full of life and promise . . . why didn't anybody tell

her . . . why didn't I tell her?

"Al" by Lois A. Huffman

The first time I met Al was on the playground. He ran up to me with bewilderment in his eyes. Blood was running from his arm as profanities were spouting from his mouth. He was pointing at a large 5th grader with a ball in his hand. I asked him what the problem was and he told me between curses that a 5th grader hit him. I gave each child the chance to tell his side of the story. The problem seemed to be with Al. Al was stealing the ball from the 5th graders when they were trying to play basketball. Within five minutes the dispute was over. The two boys went their separate ways. Al had a big smile on his face as he left. He seemed pleased that he caused so much turmoil. He had completely forgotten about his arm and was searching for someone else to pick on. That is when I realized that Al was a youth at risk.

I developed an interest in Al from that first encounter and made it a point to watch him. We became good friends on the playground. His playground behavior improved from the extra attention that I provided. I filled a basic need that Al wasn't getting at home. Al's experience with adults had taught him that

they were unpredictable and unreliable. He seemed to be reaching beyond his immediate family in search for a substitute attachment with me. Brendtro, Brokenleg, and Van Bockern describe Menninger's observation of this type of behavior in his work with troubled children. Al fit Menninger's description perfectly.

Later that year our school conducted a student survey to help identify at risk students. Al definitely fell into the at risk category. Al had been in constant trouble and was a severe problem for his teachers. He identified me as the only thing he felt positive about at school. It was decided that Al would be placed in my classroom the next year.

I was provided lots of advice from Al's former teachers when they found he would be in my classroom. None of his former teachers had anything positive to say about Al. The advice was geared at keeping Al's negative impact on the class to a minimum. I was also given advice on how to retain my sanity during a year with Al. Nobody seemed particularly concerned with helping Al. After four years in this environment, the outcome of the hidden curriculum was becoming obvious. Al had "learned" that nobody there liked him and, therefore, he didn't like anyone either. It

is hard to feel positive about school if you know nobody there likes you. I knew that this would be the first thing I had to overcome. Students such as Al who have never had a positive relationship with a teacher frequently drop out of school.

My first day with Al began the same way I begin every new school term. I encourage the students to think of the class as family. I illustrated how much time we will spend together and the importance of thinking about other people's feelings and needs. Theologian Martin Marty observes that "it has always been the tribe rather than the nuclear family that ultimately ensures cultural survival" (Brendtro, Brokenleg, and Van Bockern, 1990, pp. 10). Biological parents are often unreliable, and the young need to be nourished by the tribe. Marty also states that communities cannot avoid their tribal responsibilities for at-risk youth. That is what I try to incorporate into my classroom.

I cannot say that I did not have trouble with Al. The first quarter of the year was very difficult. However, I never allowed his behavior to change the way I treated him. Slowly his behavior started to improve. He began staying after class to "help" me. We developed a very strong bond, and in time we both

forgot that Al was supposed to be in trouble all the time. He was genuinely proud of the fact that he was doing well in school. The last quarter of school Al actually earned straight A's.

Brendtro, Brokenleg, and Van Bockern support Urie Brofenbrenner's curriculum for caring, explaining that it is not caring for students to preach to them or order them to comply with your wishes. What needs to be done is to call on them, to call <u>from</u> them, to need them, to make them feel important. We cannot assume that the blame lies with the troubled child alone. Students reflect values of societal institutions, including schools designed so that some young people achieve at the expense of others. Al was a product of four years in public schools.

A month ago I received a call from Al's summer school principal. The principal wanted to know what I had done to keep Al under control. I explained to her that Al needed to feel loved by the teacher. The angrier a teacher gets at Al, the worse his behavior becomes. I told her that Al would try every teacher at the beginning, and to tell the teacher not to let Al see her angry.

As I hung up the phone, I thought of all the obstacles Al and

I had conquered. How we had become family and how much we cared for each other. Then a sick feeling slowly took hold of me. Al, the youth that I had worked so hard to reclaim, was once again "unclaimed."

"Brenda" from the Journal of Anita Roudebush

April 11

Whew, what a day! Brenda came into class this morning looking horrible. It looked as if she'd slept in her clothes and hadn't combed her hair.

When I asked her for her homework, she simply glared at me and turned to talk to the girl beside her.

Later in the period we were working through a math problem on the board. I asked Brenda to identify the value of x. "I don't know. No clue," was her response. I started to rephrase the question, hoping she'd try to answer. "I don't give a _____ about no ____ !!"

This isn't the first time I've been talked to roughly by a student. But this was the first time I felt such deep hostility directed solely at me. Not knowing exactly what to do, I gave the class some problems to keep them busy and asked Brenda to

come out into the hallway.

She was close to tears and I knew that anything I said about the outburst would only make things worse. After a few moments I asked, "Is there something you'd like to talk about?" She had lowered her head so that I couldn't see her face. But I could tell she had started crying. Another few seconds passed and then suddenly she began to tell it all. In one long sentence she let out the emotions that had been building inside her. I immediately knew I was in above my head and that we would both need counseling on how to deal with this situation. I went with Brenda to the school psychologist.

I'll not go into the nature of Brenda's home life. What I would like to do is compare Richard Cardinal's story to Brenda's.

Like Richard Cardinal, Brenda was unable to find a positive solution to her feelings of loneliness and abandonment because she wasn't given the opportunity to "let down her guard." Brenda told me afterwards that the reason she acted out at me was because she knew I would do something. She didn't feel comfortable enough to come directly to me with her problems, but she reached out to me through another channel.

I believe it is absolutely necessary for students to know they can trust a teacher. Now I know that at least one student got that message. Too many times the hidden curriculum is that of indifference to the student's needs. The "don't unload on me, I'm finished at three" mind set of many teachers conveys a lack of concern to students.

If in our curriculum we could integrate a less rigid, more people-oriented program, more students with problems similar to those of Brenda and Richard could be reclaimed. I've learned that a student's "acting out" may really be an attempt at "reaching out."

Brenda is still working through her many problems, but she did stay in school and should be returning this fall.

"Everett" by Drew Harris

Everett was an extremely courteous young man, and there were few times you'd pass him in the hallway that he didn't have a big "Hi, how ya doin?" to greet you. I had Everett in my general math class one semester. Academics were not his strong suit. He was in the learning disabilities room for two hours a day and on the borderline in nearly all his classes. The thing that kept

him above water was the fact that he worked so very hard. He had a difficult time following lectures and generally required personal instruction on the content I had just presented. Although most teachers find this rather frustrating, I found Everett's desire so sincere that I didn't mind. While I'm sure Everett didn't learn a lot about mathematics or English in high school, I do think that he learned that it's important to take the time to help people and to care (which is a hidden curriculum all teachers would do well to transmit to students).

While Everett had many positive qualities that you love to see in youths, he had some serious problems, but few, including myself at first, went beyond the classroom in our concern. It's much easier to care when it's all conveniently in your room, but to have to go beyond requires time and effort.

Everett had practically no friends, the fact that his clothes were hardly ever washed and that he seldom bathed made it difficult to be around him on some days. It wasn't until the head football coach talked him into coming out for football that I realized the cause of the majority of his problems. I often took Everett home after practice since his house was almost on my

way. He lived a few miles out of town in a mobile home that was practically falling apart. He informed me that there were nine of them living there most of the time. His mother, two behaviorally disordered brothers, one unmarried sister, her two children, and another sister and her spouse. One night as we approached his house we saw the majority of his family out on the lawn. He informed me that from time to time his mom and her boyfriend locked them out so they could have the house to themselves for a little while.

The football coach and I talked to the counselor and administration, but there was not much they could do. Child welfare had checked them out a couple of times and wouldn't do anything. Attempts by the administration to talk to the mother were practically ignored. Everett informed us one day that he needed to quit football, and maybe even school. He was eighteen and a senior, and his mom thought he ought to quit and get a job to supplement her welfare checks. Everett was really depressed, and started to withdraw from talking to anyone for a few days. He just didn't know what to do, or where to go next.

We talked to the administration and arranged for Everett to

get a job washing the gym towels, and working in the middle school cafeteria washing dishes. We let him know that in addition to washing towels, he could also wash his own clothes. His being involved in football also gave him cause to shower daily. His personal appearance improved considerably. His new-found revenue, which he shared with his mother, kept her content. Thus, Everett stuck the year out. That fall he also came out for my wrestling team. I'll not soon forget the look on his face when he won his first match. And while there were two incidents where he had money stolen while at home, he managed to survive there and graduate that spring. He moved out that summer and got his own apartment and even invited one of his brothers to come live with him. The last time I saw Everett he was working three jobs and really seemed pretty happy.

It always amazed me that a kid who had been through so much could keep such a positive attitude. He was probably one of the most polite kids I've ever met. But, I'd have to say that if it had not been for one person, our football coach, actually being concerned enough to go beyond his curriculum and beyond the walls of the building, this story would have a much different ending.

Everett was a student on the edge, a young man on the verge of not making it, a 'student at risk.' He made it because at least one educator cared.

"Jamee" by Nancy McGrath

To better understand the concepts explored by BBvB, I asked a 13-year-old neighbor, Jamee, to record her activities for five days on an hourly time log. I would like to share my interpretations with you.

As Jamee and I talked about her time log, we spent more time together. I kept seeing and hearing Jamee's cries of her being "tribeless." I remember vividly one incident where Jamee was dancing to the music of Swan Lake all alone on the driveway wearing a pink, frilly tutu. Both of Jamee's parents work and spend many hours at their family-owned business. Her brothers, several years older, spend much of their time together pursuing their own interests. Jamee spends three to five hours a day watching television and two to three hours a day playing with friends. She is leasing a horse this summer from a local riding academy. She was able to do this by saving money she earned from her one to five Sunday job at the family business. She breaks

down (sorts and separates the pants, shirts and jackets for dry cleaning) the returned tuxedos. She did not express any pride or responsibility in her work. She said she was on the payroll and did what she was told to do. Jamee also had the opportunity to earn twenty dollars a day by cleaning the house. To receive the twenty dollars, she had to complete all the jobs listed on a form given to her by her mother. Jamee stated she hated housework and only volunteered to clean when she needed the money to buy magazines and to help pay the rental fee for her horse. She did show financial responsibility by paying a part of $120.00 a month for the leasing of her horse. Her parents make the monthly payment and she reimburses them. Jamee also cleans the house and is paid when her mother says the house is such a mess Jamee has to do it. Jamee did not seem to reflect any pride in the appearance of her home. She did not express any self satisfaction in doing a good job. The cleaning was done only when absolutely necessary and as a means to an end (financial rewards).

Spending two hours every other day with her horse was another example of the sense of belonging and caring. Jamee hopes to try

out this fall for the seventh grade volleyball team (another example of striving to belong).

Jamee did volunteer work at a local health care center for five hours on Wednesday and two hours on Thursday. She spent time sorting personal care packages the center received from tornado donations. While I was complimenting her on the commitment to volunteer and help others, she told me she didn't think of it as volunteering because her mother told her to do it. She did it because her mother served as volunteer director at the health care center. Jamee evidenced no sense of social responsibility or concern.

On the time log in the category of school related activities Jamee had a zero for the five days. She explained she never did those kinds of things in the summer. However, her parents said they wanted her to raise her "test scores," so they purchased some English and math workbooks.

After spending time with Jamee and analyzing the time log and rereading my notes and literature from class, I realized you do not have to go to the inner cities to find and reclaim youth at risk. We have them right here in the midwest. According to

Brendtro, Brokenleg & Van Bockern (1990) the elements of a positive relationship are responsibility, caring, knowledge and respect. I would like to use these guidelines and briefly restructure the environment for Jamee.

Jamee could be responsible for the feeding of the family pets. She would have to fulfill that responsibility or the animals would die. Her job would have a purpose. Also, on the Sunday job her parents could stress to her the importance of her job and how the entire family works together for the good of the business (the pride of ownership and working together for the unity of the family business). Jamee could directly make payments on her horse rental fee. The rooming of her horse shows caring and responsibility. At the health care center she could develop caring relationships with the patients. The interactions between Jamee and the patients could not only show caring, but mutual respect.

Jamee's parents might provide a more nurturing environment at home. They could spend time with her and help her with her studies by going to the library, reading together, and talking over current events on the news or in the newspaper. The family

business would be a great opportunity to practice those math and English skills. Checking invoices when breaking down the tuxedos, reading literature about the new tuxedos and reviewing bride magazines for new tuxedo designs would be just a few of the opportunities for Jamee to experience positive growth development.

The broken circle can be mended but educators as well as parents must respond to the needs of the discouraged children.

"Trial of the Innocent" by Scott Hieger

"That's it . . . I've had enough of this and I'm going to do something about it . . . You're going to be put on trial."

The seventh graders in Mr. A.s' social studies class watched with wide-eyed intent as their instructor tore into a fellow classmate. The object of his wrath was a small boy by the name of Dale. Through the thick lens of his horn-rim glasses Dale stared back at Mr. A. and didn't say a word. But then again Dale never did say much, everyone knew that he was "stupid." Dale just looked at his teacher with a sort of blank look.

"That's right, we're going to have a trial and you are going to be tried and sentenced by your own classmates . . . Everyday

you give me the wrong answers and never study . . . What's wrong with you . . . oh, that's right, don't answer . . . Do you think the other kids will put up with you not knowing anything . . . I know I won't anymore."

"Answer me!"

The blank look still remained on Dale's face but his lip began to quiver. A lip that was still heavily scarred from a childhood operation needed to repair a cleft palate.

"I need eight of you to be a jury . . . Hands up . . . Who's going to be on the jury . . . ."

Eight student were selected from the classroom. Each one was asked in front of everyone else whether or not they liked the accused. If they had no preference either way they were allowed to be on the jury. No one spoke out against what was going on. Dale observed the entire proceedings, watching as he found out what his classmates felt about him.

"Scott, do you like Dale?"

"I don't know . . . not really, we always get in fights."

"Good, then you get to be the prosecutor . . . Who, wants to defend him . . . Mary, what do you feel about him?"

"Oh, I like him."

I knew that Mary lied, she didn't like him any more than I or any other "smart" member of the class did. In fact, there were kids on the jury that always tormented Dale. They were all liars.

"Okay, you get to be the defender, Dale move on up here, next to me, were you can see everything."

With that, the class room was rearranged to resemble a courtroom with me as prosecutor, Mary as defender, liars as jury, and Mr. A. as the judge. Off to the side of the teacher's desk was Dale, blank look and all. Since I was the prosecutor, I got to go first, I had to call up witnesses who were to describe how bad the defendant was. I asked about failed tests, fights out on the playground, dumb answers of the "I don't know" type. I had this guilty feeling of power. Me--the one with skinny arms and legs so uncoordinated that I was a joke to my father. Me--with the same kind of horn rim glasses on a skinny face as Dale. Me--the one with one thing that made me think I was better than Dale --I was "smart."

Each time I called a witness, the witness wouldn't tell what

really happened and Mary was able to successfully defend against my arguments. Mr. A. just sat behind his desk and smiled and told me that I was out of order if I happened to bring in Dale's performance in other classes. Dale just seemed to sit there and watch, he never said anything in his defense until I called him to the stand.

"So why won't you do your work?"

" . . . I don't know . . . "

"Why are you always getting into fights?"

" . . . I don't know why . . . kids pick on me . . . ."

I was frustrated. Why weren't things going right here . . . I was losing . . . Why I wasn't lying about anything? Once again the defender -- Mary the liar -- was able to turn around what I was saying. Mr. A. then called for our closing statements. I said that I thought Dale was guilty and Mary coolly and politely pleaded that he was innocent. Our instructor then sent the jury off to a corner to deliberate. No one had any idea what Mr. A. would do with Dale if the jury came back with a guilty verdict.

"Do the members of the jury have a verdict?"

"He's innocent."

Dale got up and walked back to his desk over by the closet. No one said much and the bell was just about ready to ring. As I walked back to my seat I said to Mary. "I should've won." Mary just smiled and walked with me back to our desks which were on the opposite side of the room from Dale.

Not much was ever said about the trial. The rest of the kids in my class treated me the same as ever; we all treated Dale the same as before -- so did Mr. A. If word got home to some of the parents, nothing ever surfaced and if it did, well Dale's parents were "different" anyway. But Dale, I think, really hated me after that day. Before the trial we weren't enemies, we just didn't get along too well. After the trial, Dale avoided me. I think he might have hated me more than Mr. A.

But time went on, and as I hung out with the "smart" bunch, I didn't have too much to do with Dale.

Now that I am older, I realize what really happened that day. Mr. A. destroyed the self-esteem of a small boy in desperate need of affection and guidance and I was one of the tools he used to do it. Dale was never "smart", in fact he was held back in first grade. Since our class was so large in elementary school, we were

often split into two classrooms. They didn't split us randomly, but rather on ability. The smart kids were in one room and the slower students -- the ones that had been held back and got poor grades -- in the other room. The teachers always said that the classes weren't split into smart ones and dumb ones, but we knew better. Several of the students in the other classroom, Dale included, spent time with the special education teachers. No one from my room ever went to Special Ed.

I'm not trying to justify my role in what happened. I'm just retelling it to the best of my ability. To this day I feel guilty for what I did on that day. Who was I, the nerd that I was, to feel that I had the right to say the things I did. I cannot help but think of the pain, humiliation, and hatred he must have felt on that day and ever since. My God, the damage that was done. Mr. A. never thought twice about verbally abusing his social studies students when it came to their abilities. However, no parent, teacher, or administrator ever did anything about it. In those days, nobody questioned a teacher's actions and immeasurable damage was done by that one man.

Mr. A. remained in the school for another eight or nine

years, teaching in the same manner and then divorced, fathered a child with a girl twenty years his junior, then moved to another district to teach.

Dale now sports a bushy beard and mustache. The scar is no longer visible. At our ten-year class reunion, he didn't speak to me.

As I confront the issue and reconstruct pedagogically (Symth, 1989), I realize it's too late to reclaim Dale. But it's not too late for others . . . .

I'm now at The Wichita State University trying to become a teacher.

The innocents do the penance and the guilty go free.

There are many ways in which Dale might have been reclaimed: having caring teachers, kids that understood diversity and disabilities, a supportive administration, active parental involvement, etc. But none of this happened. Teachers can be the door to a wide world of fulfillment or they can slam shut the prison door and leave a person in hell.

"Street Children--a broader view" by Dave Shelly

The plight of street children is a growing problem in Latin

American cities. It is nothing new that children work and often live in the streets. BBvB tell of the gamines of Bogotá, Colombia, and of the work of Father Javier de Nicolo in that city. The case of Nahamán, a Guatemalan youth beaten to death by law enforcement officers (Tasker, 1990, pp. 5-6B), illustrates, however, a tragic new dimension--the growing pattern of police and vigilante violence, even killings, directed against the street children. It is a crisis in Bogotá, Rio de Janeiro, Lima and many other cities, as well as Guatemala City. Outcasts of society, these children are viewed as criminals who deserve to be destroyed with impunity.

The case of Nahamán has become something of a cause celebre because of the fact that a number of organizations decided to take action, banding together to insist that the killers of Nahamán be brought to justice. The case was even featured on a U.S. television documentary program, which I videotaped and played for some of my Spanish classes last year.

But the case of Nahamán is an exception. Many street children die and nobody cares except for the other street children.

In Honduras these children are called cipotes. When a group of my Wichita Spanish students and I arrived at Tocontín Airport in Tegucigalpa in June of 1991, we were met by a noisy swarm of small boys as soon as we stepped out of the airport door. They all wanted to carry our bags for a fee. It was an emotional scene for the Wichita students, now bluntly aware that we "weren't in Kansas anymore." One of the students broke down in tears; another helplessly tried to pass out bubble gum to each of them.

What hope is there for reclaiming these children? BBvB do not go into detail about Father de Nicolo's work but do make some statements about what will not work: "To demand submission is to fuel rebellion and the rejection of adult values. The formidable challenge is to develop new educational approaches that avoid the pitfalls of either overindulgence or authoritarian obedience" (1990, p. 22). The long-term need is social reconstruction, but that is certainly not going to happen in a school system that is not founded on democratic principles.

As for the short-term there are some notable efforts to do something about the problem. After our Wichita students survived

the shock of Tocontín airport, their first destination in Tegucigalpa was a church-run orphanage that takes some of the cipotes and gives them love, a place to sleep, and adequate food to eat. The kids go to regular public schools so they will socialize with other children, and they receive special tutoring in the evening. The Kansas visitors had the chance to play soccer and several children's games with cipotes who are on their way to a different kind of life.

When they are old enough, the children receive job training in specific skills through the same program. We were told that youth are instantly employable upon graduation from the three-year vocational program--they are among the best-trained welders and carpenters in Honduras, and there is always work for skilled craftsmen, even in a country with astronomical rates of unemployment.

Though the public schools as such are not a route for reclaiming these youth (without outside intervention) or for social reconstruction, there is still a place for education in the process of bringing about change. Paulo Freire (1968) is one of the leading educational theoreticians in the field of

education through conscientizaçao, a process of coming to awareness in which the poor realize that things do not have to be as they are and that they have the means and responsibility to bring about change in their lives.

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insert Figure 2 here

In terms of the demeaning "D's of deviance" identified by Brendtro, Brokenleg and Van Bockern (Figure 2), it is clear that the gamines or cipotes are seen by society as deviant, delinquent and disobedient. Society reacts to them with anger and punishment. Others, would rather they just go away. But when we played "duck, duck, goose" with the younger children or conversed over lunch with the future metal workers and electricians of Honduras, we felt an affection, an empowerment, an encouragement that indeed can reclaim these "deviant" children.

R.C. Reclaimed

"Julie" by William Hagerman

When Julie was 4 years old, her father decided that he had

had enough. He left Julie and her mother after 10 years of troubled marriage. Julie was devastated, and felt that no one really cared about her. She felt that her father had abandoned her and she was all alone in the world. Julie and her mother had never gotten along very well. Julie's mother had always made Julie feel that she had interrupted her mother's career in fashion design. Julie had come along at a crucial time in her mother's career, when her mother was just beginning to get some notice in the fashion world. Consequently, Julie's mother never gave her much attention and love, so Julie never felt that she had much of a family. When Julie was nine years old her mother died suddenly. Julie, indeed, had no family. Julie went to live with her grandmother and step-grandfather in a town 1500 miles away. Julie's grandmother had good intentions, but she did not understand about peer pressure and adolescence.

Julie moved from one problem to another during her early adolescent years, including abusing drugs, running away, and becoming pregnant. Julie "solved" the unwanted pregnancy by having an abortion (unbeknown to her grandparents). At the age of 15, Julie felt that her life was a wreck and that she had no

way out except to end it all. After her first suicide attempt, things did not improve much for Julie. Again, she ran away, but this time she was put in a home for delinquent girls.

All during this time, school for Julie was only something that she endured. She was a very bright girl, and school was so easy for her that she was bored most of the time. Her grades didn't reflect her true abilities because she was absent much of the time, and she could always forge excuse notes from her grandmother.

During her senior year of high school (amazingly, Julie did stay in school), Julie encountered a home-ec teacher who was different from other teachers. Julie had never had anyone ever tell her that she was talented. She had always been told that she was lazy, indifferent, and that she had no respect for those in authority. It was true, Julie had had several sessions in the principal's office for challenging teachers when she was told to do something that wasn't to her liking. When this happened, Julie would finally give in, shrug off the "lecture," and go on, not much caring what happened to her. Her home-ec. teacher, on the other hand, talked to Julie as if she was a living,

breathing, human being, who had worth. Julie would spend time in the home-ec teacher's room after school, helping some of the younger students finish their projects. The home-ec teacher commented several times about how helpful Julie was and told Julie that many of the undergraduate students looked up to her. When a group of home-ec students wanted to form a sewing club, they invited Julie to join. The club entered several projects in various shows and usually won "best of the show."

Five years later, Julie graduated from a teacher's college and immediately found a job teaching in a suburban high school with many frustrated and bored "Julies."

Julie's story did not have the tragic ending that Richard Cardinal's story had. Julie was reclaimed by a caring, innovative, home-ec teacher who gave Julie a sense of belonging and a sense of worth by encouraging her to help others. Julie also could use her mastery of sewing (one thing that her grandmother taught her to do well) as a source of independence, and then she was able to give back to her group, the sewing club, and the home-ec class.

I don't know if the home-ec teacher understood all the

implications of her seemingly very simple act of kindness and caring toward Julie, but it certainly had the effect of "reclaiming" Julie. The operational taught curriculum in home-ec class accomplished much more for "family living" than any planned curriculum could have ever hoped to achieve.

"A Reflection on Reclaiming" by an Anonymous Educator

As a small boy of 6 or 7 years of age I often dreamed, as many small boys do, I suppose, of having superpowers. Powers to turn invisible or to own supernatural strength are two such examples. One power which allowed me to communicate across any distance was one I've never forgotten. I'm 26 years old now and many of my childhood dreams have been lost forever in the day to day priorities of my adult life, but not this power of communication.

Some would call this power I refer to E.S.P., but I like to leave it unlabeled, other than to call it a small boy's imagination. Then, and even today, I felt that just maybe there was something to this make-believe power.

I remember closing my eyes, squinting real hard, and imagining I was reaching across space to communicate with

someone. (And my brothers, whom I practiced on, thought that little voice inside their head was their own.)

I'll return to the purpose for this reflection a little later, but right now I want you to picture an at-risk youth. He's not aware that he's at-risk, but is none the less.

The land where this boy lives is as flat as any God created. So flat, dry, and barren, if you weren't born there, you would completely miss its hidden beauty. The beauty of a sky so blue you would swear it had to be painted. The beauty of an orange sunset as the day's last rays reached out across the flat plains of Eastern Colorado. Or the beauty of seeing clearly, every star the night sky has to offer.

The community where our youth lives is a major metropolis of 300 residents. The majority of people here are farmers or ranchers, living off the land and owing their complete livelihood to a few well-timed rainstorms.

During the end of August, 1973 our youth steps into his classroom with a teacher and classmates all new to him. This is the 5th new school for him as he begins his 4th year of school. He is scared to death because he thinks he is a failure. He is

behind in all subjects, has been labeled as a "troubled child," hasn't come close to memorizing the multiplication facts other students have mastered, and has often been involved in fights with many of his peers. Fighting is the one area in which our youth excels, rarely losing. This is the majority of what he has to show for his three previous years in school. His mom and dad are separated, and he lives with his mom and two brothers. His other five brothers live with his dad.

Although this picture appeals bleak and the circumstances are set for the complete failure of this child, there is hope. "Hope" is Mr. Ray. Hope is 6 ft. 3 in. tall, young, soft spoken, friendly, and teaches 4th grade.

Hope has some different ideas about teaching, other than the traditional approaches to education. Hope doesn't look at children and see raw, dull, ignorant clay waiting to be molded into shape by discipline and tough assignments. What hope sees are beautiful, miniature human beings with the desire to learn built right in. Just like purchasing a toy and finding that the batteries are already included. He sees learning as a fun experience where students can learn relevant information with the

teacher as a guide and role model. Hope is all of these things, but most of all, Hope is kind. He believes students need to feel important, so he listens to their stories and comments. He believes everyone needs a friend, so he is a friend to all his students, yet firm. He believes students need to learn to be responsible so he involves them in hands on projects, such as starting a classroom cookie company, selling student-made cookies to community members, and using profits to purchase reference materials for the class.

Whether through a conscious effort or put plain natural instinct, Hope has set up a reclaiming environment for this troubled youth. By the time our youth leaves Mr. Ray's class, there is a new light burning inside. The light glows of confidence and excitement about learning. He is a new person with a new attitude and even though the future may try to kill the light, it will never be put out. It has been safely planted away deep inside where no one can reach it. Learning has become a continuous process which will last until the learner dies.

This story is one of success and has a happy ending. The youth in this story has beat many odds. He is now an elementary

teacher, just like Mr. Ray. He not only went on to complete college, but is now two-thirds finished with his masters degree, and his long term goals include a Ph.D. He is thriving and doing well and has always remembered Mr. Ray, which brings me back to the superpower I mentioned before.

The at-risk youth in this story is me and I want this power of communication that I dreamed of as a small boy. I want it because I want to reach out to Mr. Ray but have no idea where he is. I want to thank him for giving me my light, and tell him he will always be my friend. If it was only possible to close my eyes, squint real hard, and talk to him, I would do so in a second.

What the heck, it's worth a try . . . . Mr. Ray if you got that message, then there really is magic in a small boy's imagination.

CONCLUSION

Perhaps after all readings have been accomplished, models studied, and theories discussed, the most significant outcome is that many of these teachers feel hopeful that what they have learned will help them to do better with other students on the

edge. They are empowered by the realization that as the nation labors to achieve democracy for all and districts restructure to claim success, they, as teachers, have the power to reclaim the individual lives that are being snuffed out by bureaucracy, indifference, naiveté, and institutionalized inequality implicit in the hidden curriculum.

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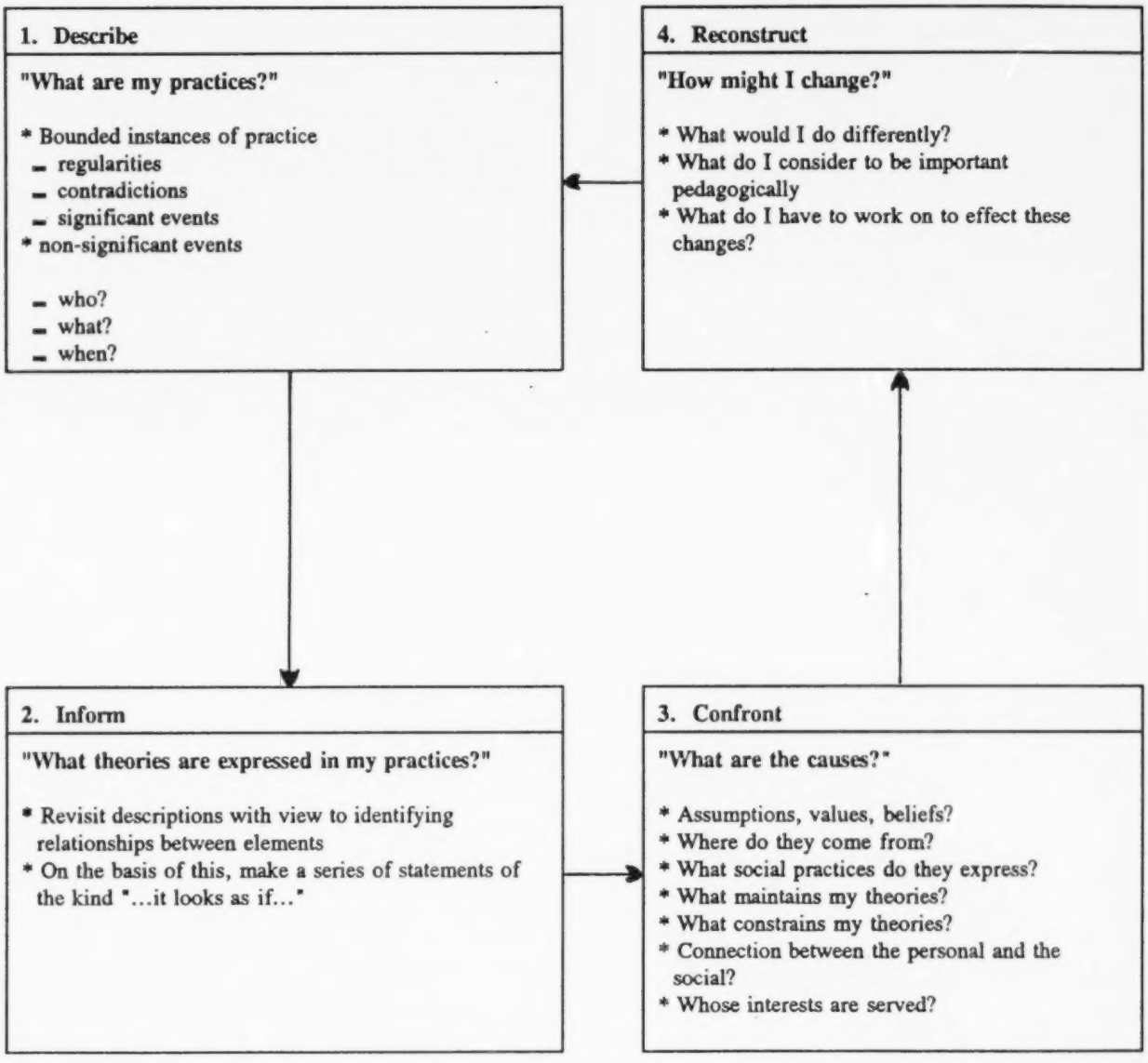
WHEN TEACHERS CONFRONT THEIR TEACHING


1. Describe
"What are my practices?"
* Bounded instances of practice
- regularities
- contradictions
- significant events
* non-significant events
- who?
- what?
- when?
4. Reconstruct
"How might I change?"
* What would I do differently?
* What do I consider to be important pedagogically
* What do I have to work on to effect these changes?
2. Inform
"What theories are expressed in my practices?"
* Revisit descriptions with view to identifying relationships between elements
* On the basis of this, make a series of statements of the kind "...it looks as if..."
3. Confront
"What are the causes?"
* Assumptions, values, beliefs?
* Where do they come from?
* What social practices do they express?
* What maintains my theories?
* What constrains my theories?
* Connection between the personal and the social?
* Whose interests are served?

adapted by T. Huber from: Smyth, J. (1989). Developing and sustaining critical reflection in teacher education. Journal of Teacher Education, 40(2), 2-9.

Figure 1 A Model for Critical Reflection

THEORY	PROBLEM	TYPICAL RESPONSES
Primitive	Deviant	blame, attack, ostracize
Folk Religion	Demonic	chastise, exorcise, banish
Biophysical	Diseased	diagnose, drug, hospitalize
Psychoanalytic	Disturbed	analyze, treat, seclude
Behavioral	Disordered	assess, condition, time out
Correctional	Delinquent	adjudicate, punish, incarcerate
Sociological	Deprived	study, resocialize, assimilate
Social Work	Dysfunctional	intake, case manage, discharge
Educational	Disobedient	reprimand, correct, expel
Special Education	Disabled	label, remediate, segregate

Figure 2. Brendtro, Brokenleg, and Van Bockern's Ten D's of Deviance in Approaches to Difficult Youth